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Cipu language

Cipu (*Cicipu*), or **Western Acipa**, is a Kainji language spoken by about 20,000 people in northwest Nigeria. The people call themselves *Acipu*, and are called *Acipawa* in Hausa.[3]

Like most Benue–Congo languages, Cipu has a complex noun class system.[4] It has a fairly complex phonology with lexical and grammatical tone, vowel harmony and nasalisation.

Virtually all Cipu speakers speak the lingua franca Hausa. Many also speak other nearby languages.

Cipu	
Western Acipa	
Cicipu	
Native to	Nigeria
Region	Kebbi State, Niger State
Native speakers	(20,000 cited 1995)[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo ▪ Benue–Congo ▪ Kainji ▪ Kambari ▪ **Cipu**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`awc`
Glottolog	`cici1237 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/cici1237)`[2]

Cipu	
Person	Cipu
People	Acipu
Language	Cicipu

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Classification

Cipu is part of the Kambari branch of the Niger–Congo languages.

The most recent published classification[5] has Cipu as part of the Kamuku group of West Kainji along with Eastern Acipa. However more detailed studies[6][7] have shown this to be unlikely.

Alternative names

The *Ethnologue* currently lists Cipu as 'Western Acipa'. However the name 'Western Acipa' is no longer used outside the *Ethnologue*, and a request has been made to change the entry.[8] In Hausa, the language is referred to as *Acipanci* and the people as *Acipawa*.

Geographic distribution

Cicipu is spoken in Nigeria by approximately 20,000 people,[9] split between Sakaba Local Government Area, Kebbi State and Kontagora Local Government Area, Niger State.

Dialects/Varieties

The Acipu themselves recognise seven distinct varieties of Cicipu. The dialect names are as follows (with the corresponding Hausa names in parentheses):

- Tirisino (Karishen)
- Tidipo (Kadonho)
- Tizoriyo (Mazarko)
- Tidodimo (Kadedan)
- Tikula (Maburya)
- Ticuhun (Kakihum)
- Tikumbasi (Kumbashi)

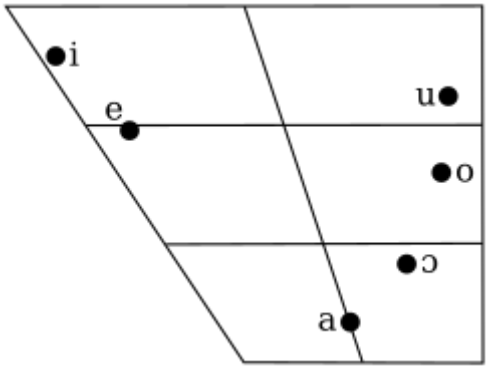
Phonology

The most common syllable type in Cicipu is CV, although there are fairly strong arguments for N and CVN. A small number of noun and verb roots begin with a V syllable. Lexical tone contrasts are found in nouns e.g. *káayá* ‘house’ and *káayà* ‘bean’, but not in verbs (although grammatical tone is important for verbs).

Vowels

Cicipu has an asymmetric six-vowel system. All vowels can be long or short, and all have nasalised counterparts. There are four diphthongs: /ei/, /eu/, /ai/ and /au/.

Monophthongs	Front	Central	Back
Close	i, iː		u, uː
Close-mid	e, eː		o, oː
Open-mid			ɔ, ɔː
Open		a, aː	



Vowel chart of the Tirisino dialect of Cipu[10]

Consonants

Consonant length is contrastive in Cicipu, e.g. *yuwo* 'fall' vs. *yuwwo* 'turn around'. Any consonant may be lengthened.

Consonant phonemes

		Labial	Dental or alveolar	Postalveolar or palatal	Velar		Glottal		
					Plain	Labialized	Palatalized	Plain	Labialized
Plosives and affricates	Voiceless	p	t	tʃ	k	kʷ	ʔʲ	ʔ	ʔʷ
	Voiced	b	d	dʒ	g	gʷ			
	Implosive	ɓ	ɗ						
Fricatives	Voiceless		s				hʲ	h	hʷ
	Voiced	v	z						
Nasals		m	n						
Rhotic			ɾ						
Approximants			l	j		w			

Vocabulary

A large number of Cicipu words are borrowings from the lingua franca Hausa. The pronunciation of many of these loanwords has changed to fit in with Cicipu phonology, in particular with respect to vowel harmony.

Writing system

Cicipu is not currently written, although a preliminary orthography proposal has been made, and a small number of trial books has been circulated.[11]

See also

- Journal of West African Languages

References

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External links

- Cicipu language website (http://www.cicipu.org)

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